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IN THE CLAIMS

Rewrite claims 16, 24 and 32-33 as follows:

16. (Amended) A computer-implemented auction method for performing an auction and resolving a competitive state among a plurality of bidders on a network, comprising the steps of:

providing information on a product to be auctioned via the network;

collecting a maximum margin of the price acceptable to pay proposed by each bidder via the network; and

if the auction assumes a competitive state by the plurality of bidders proposing the same conditions, increasing a bid price and resolving the competitive state in accordance with the increased bid price and the maximum margins proposed by the competitive bidders.

24. (Amended) A computerized auction apparatus for performing an auction and resolving a competitive state among a plurality of bidders, the apparatus connected to a plurality of bidder terminals used by respective bidders via a network, comprising:

means for providing information on a product to be auctioned via the network;

means for collecting a maximum margin corresponding to the price acceptable to pay proposed by each bidder via the network; and

means, if the auction assumes a competitive state by the plurality of bidders proposing the same conditions, for increasing a bid price and resolving the competitive state in accordance with the increased bid price and the maximum margins proposed by the competitive bidders.

32. (Amended) A computerized auction apparatus for performing an auction and resolving a competitive state among a plurality of bidders, the apparatus connected to a plurality of bidder terminals used by respective bidders via a network, comprising:

a storage device storing a program; and

a processor, connected to said storage device,

executing the following steps according to the program:

providing information on a product to be auctioned via the network;

collecting a maximum margin corresponding to the price acceptable to pay proposed by each bidder via the network; and

if the auction assumes a competitive state by the plurality of bidders proposing the same conditions, increasing a bid price and resolving the competitive state in accordance with the increased bid price and the maximum margins proposed by the competitive bidders.

33. (Amended) A program storage device readable and executable by an auction apparatus for performing an auction method and resolving a competitive state among a plurality of bidders, the apparatus connected to a plurality of bidder terminals used by respective bidders via a network, said method including the following steps:

providing information on a product to be auctioned via the network;

collecting a maximum margin of the price acceptable to pay proposed by each bidder via the network; and

if the auction assumes a competitive state by the plurality of bidders proposing the same conditions, increasing a bid price and resolving the competitive state in accordance with the increased bid price and the maximum margins proposed by the competitive bidders.